

We Claim:

1. A computer system, comprising:

an operating system;

a power switch, operation of which, when enabled, causes a power-off of the computer system; and

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a switch mask connected to the power switch to enable and disable the power-off of the computer system without intervention by the operating system.

2. A computer system as defined in claim 1, further comprising:

an immediate power-off mode, which, when enabled by the switch mask, allows the computer system to power off immediately upon operation of the power switch; and

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a delayed power-off mode, which, when enabled by the switch mask, allows the computer system to power off upon continuous operation of the power switch for a delay period.

3. A computer system as defined in claim 1, wherein:

the switch mask, when disabling the power-off, prevents the computer system from powering off in response to operation of the power switch.

4. A computer system as defined in claim 1, wherein:

the operating system is incapable of causing the computer system to power off; and

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the switch mask, when enabling the power-off, causes the computer system to power off in response to operation of the power switch.

5. A computer system as defined in claim 4, further comprising:

a power control hardware connected to the switch mask and capable of causing the computer system to power off;

and wherein:

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the operating system is incapable of operating the power control hardware to cause the computer system to power off; and

the switch mask, when enabling the power-off, is capable of causing the power control hardware to cause the computer system to power off in response to operation of the power switch.

6. A computer system as defined in claim 5, wherein:

the power control hardware comprises an ACPI-compliant hardware;

and

- 5 the operating system comprises a non-ACPI-compliant operating system.
7. A computer system as defined in claim 1, wherein:  
the operating system is capable of causing the computer system to power off upon operation of the power switch; and  
the switch mask, when disabling the power-off, prevents the power-off of  
5 the computer system.
8. A computer system as defined in claim 7, further comprising:  
a power control hardware connected to the switch mask and capable of causing the computer system to power off;  
and wherein:  
5 the operating system is capable of operating the power control hardware to cause the computer system to power off upon operation of the power switch; and  
the switch mask, when disabling the power-off, prevents the power control hardware from powering off the computer system.
9. A computer system as defined in claim 8, wherein:  
the power control hardware comprises an ACPI-compliant hardware;  
and  
the operating system comprises an ACPI-compliant operating system.
10. A computer system, comprising:  
an operating system means;  
a means for generating a power-off signal;  
a means for powering off the computer system in response to the power-  
5 off signal; and  
a means for masking the power-off signal, independent of the operating system means, to enable and disable the power-off signal from being supplied to the powering off means.
11. A computer system as defined in claim 10, wherein:  
the masking means can enable and disable the power-off signal from being supplied to the powering off means upon generating the power-off signal; and  
the masking means can enable and disable the power-off signal from  
5 being supplied to the powering off means after a delay time period after generating the power-off signal.

12. A computer system as defined in claim 10, wherein:  
the powering off means is ACPI-compliant.

13. A power switch mask for use in a computer system, comprising:  
an input for a power-off signal;

an output for an immediate power-off signal at which the immediate  
power-off signal is supplied in response to the power-off signal when immediate  
power-off is enabled, the immediate power-off signal not being supplied when  
immediate power-off is disabled; and

an output for a delayed power-off signal at which the delayed power-off  
signal is supplied in response to continuous input of the power-off signal for a delay  
period of time when delayed power-off is enabled, the delayed power-off signal not  
being supplied when delayed power-off is disabled.

14. A power switch mask for use in a computer system, comprising:

a means for generating an immediate power-off signal in response to  
receiving a power-off signal while receiving an immediate power-off enabled signal,  
the immediate power-off signal not being generated in response to receiving the  
power-off signal while not receiving the immediate power-off enabled signal; and

a means for generating a delayed power-off signal in response to  
receiving the power-off signal continuously during a delay time period while receiving  
a delayed power-off enabled signal, the delayed power-off signal not being generated  
in response to receiving the power-off signal while not receiving the delayed power-off  
enabled signal.

15. A method for controlling powering off of a computer system, comprising:  
setting a switch mask to one of two power-off modes comprising power-  
off enabled and power-off disabled;

generating a power-off signal indicating a desire to power off the  
computer system;

intercepting the power-off signal by the switch mask;  
responding to the power-off signal according to the setting of the switch  
mask without intervention by an operating system of the computer system;

when the switch mask is set to power-off enabled, powering off the  
computer system; and

when the switch mask is set to power-off disabled, preventing powering  
off the computer system.

16. A method as defined in claim 15, wherein:  
the two aforementioned power-off modes comprise immediate power-off  
modes comprising immediate power-off enabled and immediate power-off disabled;  
and further comprising:

5        setting the switch mask to one of two delayed power-off modes  
comprising delayed power-off enabled and delayed power-off disabled; and  
      responding to the power-off signal according to the immediate power-off  
mode setting and the delayed power-off mode setting of the switch mask without  
intervention by the operating system of the computer system.

17. A method as defined in claim 15, further comprising:  
      masking the power-off signal to form at least one masked power-off  
signal according to the setting of the switch mask without intervention by the operating  
system of the computer system;

5        supplying the masked power-off signal to a power control hardware of  
the computer system; and  
      the power control hardware responding to the masked power-off signal  
by powering off the computer system when the switch mask is set to power-off  
enabled.

18. A method as defined in claim 17, wherein:  
      the power control hardware is ACPI-compliant.

19. A method as defined in claim 18, wherein:  
      the operating system is not ACPI-compliant.

20. A method as defined in claim 18, wherein:  
      the operating system is ACPI-compliant.

21. A method for controlling powering off of a computer system, comprising:  
      generating a power-off signal;  
      intercepting the power-off signal by a switch mask;  
      generating a masked power-off signal by the switch mask corresponding  
5    to the power-off signal when power-off is enabled in the switch mask; and  
      powering off the computer system in response to the masked power-off  
signal without intervention by an operating system of the computer system.

22. A method as defined in claim 21, further comprising:  
      preventing a power-off of the computer system when power-off is  
disabled in the switch mask.

23. A method as defined in claim 21, further comprising:  
preventing an immediate power-off of the computer system when  
immediate power-off is disabled in the switch mask; and  
preventing a delayed power-off of the computer system when delayed  
power-off is disabled in the switch mask

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